

## The Orgins of our Population Control Part II

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October 14, 2008

In Part I the destruction of the Personalist view of man was briefly outlined in order to show the intellectual and spiritual preparation that set the stage for the present disregard for the human person in modern science and medicine. There was a shift that seems to have taken place in the realm of goods, namely from the good of the person to the good of society. Thomas Hobbes and John Locke showed the world that if you acted for yourself society would benefit from what Tocqueville would come to call “enlightened self-interest.” But as Richard John Neuhaus states, we must consider the dignity of “the individual situated in community.”(1) Neuhaus is making a profound observation about the nature of man, that in effect man can only actualize his potential in community. When man no longer sees himself as a part of community (gemeinschaft) but merely a member of society (gesellschaft), he no longer shares a desire to act according to a common good but the good for himself.(2)

A prominent forerunner of modern advocates for the idea of supremacy of society over the individual person was Auguste Comte. According to Comte, the father of modern sociology, “our young disciples will be accustomed, from childhood, to look on the triumph of sociability over personality as the grand object of man.”(3) The shift from the good of the individual in community to the good of society as a whole marked the point at which “man” was reduced to an agglomeration of men. This view has led man to violent treatment at the hands of social planners and elites who wish to solve the world’s “problems” by eradicating its peoples, often with their help.

One of the early symptoms of this shift was the understanding that Carl Linnaeus, the famous taxonomist would espouse, man as “*homo sapiens*.” Seeing man as a species rather than a creature with unique significance paved the way for any theory applied to the function of nature to also apply to man, most notably evolution. The pioneer of evolution theory, Charles Darwin, learned from his intellectual predecessor Thomas Robert Malthus that “men” participate in an evolutionary ebb and flow of nature that demands active participation. In Malthus’ *An Essay on the Principle of Population*, written at the turn of the 19th century, he set forth his belief in a new solution to the problems that faced society, i.e. population control. According to Malthus the world’s problems were always preceded by an increase in population. The most well-known version of the nightmare stemmed from his food/population calculus which stated that population increases at an exponentially greater rate than food production and this disparity will lead to mass starvation and war.

In *The Origin of Species*, Darwin, the father of “natural selection” theory, said that essentially his proposition was “the doctrine of Malthus applied with manifold force



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to the whole animal and vegetable kingdoms.”(4) Darwin directly attributed his notions to the work of Malthus and in *The Descent of Man* he fully incorporated man into the “natural selection” schematic. As Dónal O’Mathúna, a Fellow of the Center for Bioethics and Human Dignity, observes,

The influences of social Darwinism on medical ethics must be examined carefully because Western society is currently enamored by many of these same beliefs. They are not labeled as such, and are often promoted independently. But the ideas themselves are there and already impacting current thinking within medical ethics and bioethics.(5)

O’Mathúna points to the powerful influence on medical ethics of “five tenets central to social Darwinism: that morality is relativistic, that humans do not have a unique status, that human dignity is relative, that some lives are not worth living, and that survival of the fittest is an ethical principle.”(6) Although these ideas are still with us, we must look for their manifestation in the political order to reveal the full extent of saturation in the human psyche.

Population control, which Malthus first espoused, initially participated in a movement known as utilitarianism. A contemporary of Malthus was Jeremy Bentham, whose secular utilitarian interpretation of society relies on administration to achieve the greatest happiness for the greatest number, ultimately measured in the functionality of a given society. The idea that this utilitarian schematic could overcome human frailty and achieve dominion over men is absurd but appealing. The “solution” then, to the “problem” of society in its imperfection, is to be found at the source of the weakness, in the sum of its parts, i.e. man.

The “solutions” we began to witness at the beginning of the 20th century are the result of the population control movement. According to Matthew Connelly, an Associate Professor at Columbia University, the population movement came to look “at human beings not as individuals but as populations which could be shaped through the combined force of politics and science.”(7) In 1907 Indiana passed the world’s first sterilization law and in 1909, just weeks after Washington State, California implemented the nation’s third sterilization policy in an attempt to apply science to perceived social problems. The United States Supreme Court has had its effects on population control policy as well. Using *Jacobson v. Massachusetts* (1905), which ruled that maintaining the public health outweighed individual rights when it came to smallpox immunization, Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr. wrote in his *Buck v Bell* (1927) opinion: “It is better for the world, if instead of waiting to execute degenerate offspring for crime, or to let them starve for their imbecility, society can prevent those who are manifestly unfit from continuing their kind.”(9) The background of the case itself demonstrates that the ruling was guided by a utilitarian motive rather than an honest pursuit of justice for the common good.(10)

The early population control movement was the project of many including Margaret Sanger, the primary organizer of the first World Population Conference in 1927(11) and a wild advocate for eugenics. According to Dr. Jacqueline Kasun, a Professor Emeritus of economics at Humboldt State University in California, “Sanger was one of the most influential people of her time, and counted among her friends and



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associates many of the richest and most powerful of the age.”(12) In 1933, Professor Dr. Ernst Rudin, curator of the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Anthropology, Human Genetics, and Eugenics, published an article in her magazine *Birth Control Review* that supported action to “prevent the multiplication of bad stocks” and “increase the birth-rate of the sound average population.”(13)

It is fitting that Hitler echoed Sanger’s words, “The state has the responsibility of declaring as unfit for reproductive purposes anyone who is obviously ill or genetically unsound ... and must carry through with this responsibility ruthlessly without respect to understanding or lack of understanding on the part of anyone.”(14) In the aforementioned article by O’Mathúna, it is easy to see that what most people consider anomalous in Hitler’s thinking was really on the table long before he wrote *Mein Kampf*. Essentially the Nazi regime had adopted pre-existing strains of thought that affected ethics in medicine through a distorted view of the human person.

In the post-Nazi era the “Jewish Question” has quickly been replaced by the “Population Question,” which on the surface does not contain any of the racial or ethnic overtones but nevertheless ignores inherent human worth. Activists like Sanger sought to answer this question for the good of the world through birth control. Early on some became aware of the implications of “family planning,” like Louis Dublin a famous U.S. Statistician of Sanger’s day who is quoted saying “There is a bigger issue than the immediate preference of an individual...The very life of a state is involved as soon as we begin to tamper with who shall and who shall not be born.”(15)

Unlike in the case of the Reich, however, most states are not the prime movers of population control. According to Matthew Connelly, “Population controllers could never completely ignore state sovereignty...But they did create a network of public and private agencies that constituted a novel form of global governance.”(16) These private agencies devoted themselves wholeheartedly to the task of lowering the world’s population through law, the media, and “public awareness” campaigns.(17) According to Dr. Kasun, children have been exposed to such intense “sexual education” programs that they impose “psychological and economic pressures so heavy as to amount to *coercion*”(18) (emphasis in the original). Sex education she says “is seldom explicitly promoted to the general public as a means for population control.”(19) Children are taught that “people pollute,” babies are burdens, the end of the sexual act is pleasure, and most of all that it is their choice to do what is “right.”(20) As Matthew Connelly points out, “All population control movements tended to diagnose social and political problems as pathologies with a biological basis. All shared the idea that societies should reproduce themselves by design, even if that meant controlling how people disposed of their own bodies.”(21)

Since the organizing and planning in the early part of the 20th century there have been several generations assaulted by torrents of propaganda. The ultimate goal is population control, but among the stepping stones, a crucial one is moral relativism. In 1970 an article was published in a medical journal that spoke about the changing



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ethics in medicine, “It will become necessary and acceptable to place relative rather than absolute values on such things as human lives, the use of scarce resources and the various elements which are to make up the quality of life or of living which is to be sought.” The author was prophetic as he wrote that this would have “serious philosophical, social, economic and political implications for Western society and perhaps for world society.”(22) Today groups like the ACOG (American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists) seek to foster the same ethical relativism just mentioned.(23) One group, the ZPG (formerly Zero Population Growth, now Population Connection) sees that it is necessary “to make the connection between population growth and climate change.”(24) Although the rhetoric has been polished and tailored to suit public opinion, the ideas share a common ancestry and work toward the same goal, population control.

The desire to control society to the detriment of individuals and for the “greater good” is as old as man himself. From the time of Plato the question of the best regime has brought up the issue of tyranny and total control. But with the advent of modern science ethics in medicine began to show depreciation in the value of human life. But it was only with the political regimes, which became heavily influenced by new scientific and sociological anthropologies, that degradation of man’s essential dignity became widespread. The view of man as a species, defined as a “social animal,” makes him vulnerable to mass movements such as population control. Every one must be made aware of population control and the masks that conceal it. These efforts to conceal population control have been implemented since the early 20th century and they persist even today. What we must do as a people is to hold strong and to fight at the level at which we stand. Our “private” lives must reflect an understanding of the human person that upholds his dignity. This does not mean that violent demonstration against population control is the solution or that the individual struggle is the only battleground. Every person must seek to respect their own dignity and the dignity of every person they affect to the detriment of none and the benefit of all.

(1) Neuhaus, Richard John. “Human Dignity and Public Discourse.” Human Dignity and Bioethics: Essays Commissioned by the President’s Council on Bioethics. Washington D.C., 2008

(2) Tönnies, Ferdinand. Community and Civil Society. Ed. Jose Harris. Cambridge University Press, 2001.

(3) Comte, Auguste, Catéchisme positive. Paris: Garnier, 1890. Pg: 166.

(4) Darwin, Charles: The Origin of Species. 1859. Reprint; New York: Penguin, 1958

(5) O’Mathúna, Dónal P. “Human dignity in the Nazi era: implications for contemporary bioethics.” BMC Medical Ethics 2006, 7:2.

(6) Ibid.

(7) Connelly, Matthew. “Seeing Beyond the State: The Population Control Movement and the Problem of Sovereignty.” Past and Present, no. 193. Nov. 2006. Pg: 202.

(8) Stern, Alexandra Minna, Ph.D. “Sterilized in the Name of Public Health: Race, Immigration, and Reproductive Control in Modern California.” American Journal of Public Health, July 2005, Vol. 95, No.7. Pg: 1129.



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# Briefs

- (9) U.S. Supreme Court. *Buck v. Bell*, 274 U.S. 200 (1927).
- (10) (<http://www.hsl.virginia.edu/historical/eugenics/>). Current scholarship shows that Carrie Buck's sterilization relied on a false diagnosis premised on eugenics.
- (11) The first World Population Conference which gathered sociologists, biologists, and advocates in Geneva in 1927 was held to help put birth control on the agenda of the League of Nations. A primary concern of the conference was to decide who would have the greater role to play in controlling population dynamics, biologists or sociologists. See Ramsdun, Edmund. "Carving up Population Science: Eugenics, Demography and the Controversy over the "Biological Law" of Population Growth." *Social Studies of Science*, Vol. 32, No. 5/6, .Oct. - Dec., 2002. Pg: 859.
- (12) Kasun, Jacqueline. *The War Against Population: The Economics and Ideology of World Population Control*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988. Pg: 161.
- (13) *Birth Control Review*, Vol. 17, no. 4, April 1933, p. 102, quoted in Kasun, op. cit.
- (14) Hitler, Adolf. *Mein Kampf* Munchen: Nachfolger; 1933, quoted in O'Mathúna, op. cit.
- (15) Dublin, Louis. 'The Excesses of Birth Control', in Sanger (ed.), *Sixth International Neo-Malthusian and Birth Control Conference*, ii, 180&ndash;1, quoted in Connelly, op. cit. (16) Connelly, Matthew. op. cit. Pg: 232.
- (17) See Jacqueline Kasun, op. cit. Her book provides a dated but accurate account of many organizations that still operate today and a history of their various inceptions, including the AGI, AHEA, AVS, AID, CPO, CWS, FPIA, IPAS, NARAL, NAOP, PPF, AMA, IPPF, PCC, PAC, ZPG, UNFPA, UNESCO.
- (18) Kasun, Jacqueline, op. cit. Pg: 205.
- (19) *Ibid.* Pg: 99.
- (20) Kasun, Jacqueline, op. cit. Pg: 95-114.
- (21) Connelly, Matthew, op. cit. Pg: 202.
- (22) "A New Ethic for Medicine and Society." *Calif Med.* 1970 September; 113(3): 67&ndash;68.
- (23) ACOG Committee Opinion No. 390. "Ethical Decision Making in Obstetrics and Gynecology." December, 2007. Pg: 3. (24) "The Reporter." June 2008 Vol. 40, Issue 2. Pg: 20.



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